

1 CLAIMS

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1. An email filtering method comprising:

3 defining at least one heuristic that determines whether an incoming email
4 message likely constitutes unsolicited commercial email by considering an
5 established pattern that such unsolicited commercial email typically exhibits when
6 it is sent;

7 applying said at least one heuristic to at least one email message; and

8 redirecting said at least one email message if application of said at least one
9 heuristic indicates that said at least one email message likely constitutes
10 unsolicited commercial email.

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12 2. The email filtering method of claim 1, wherein said redirecting
13 comprises placing a copy of the email message at a single location from which it
14 can be accessed by more than one intended recipient of the email message.

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16 3. The email filtering method of claim 1, wherein said defining
17 comprises defining a plurality of heuristics that are independent of the message
18 conveyed by any of the content contained in an email message.

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20 4. The email filtering method of claim 1, wherein said at least one
21 heuristic has at least one parameter that can be adjusted, and further comprising
22 adjusting said at least one parameter to vary the pattern that is considered.

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1 5. The email filtering method of claim 1, wherein said at least one
2 heuristic considers a pattern associated with the number of specified recipient
3 addresses of the email message.

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5 6. The email filtering method of claim 5, wherein the pattern is
6 associated with the number of invalid specified recipient addresses.

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8 7. The email filtering method of claim 1, wherein said at least one
9 heuristic considers a pattern associated with the size of an email message.

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11 8. The email filtering method of claim 1, wherein said at least one
12 heuristic considers patterns associated with the number of specified recipient
13 addresses of the email message and the size of the email message.

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15 9. The email filtering method of claim 1 further comprising after said
16 redirecting, notifying at least one intended recipient that an email message
17 intended for them has been redirected.

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19 10. The email filtering method of claim 1, wherein said redirecting
20 comprising redirecting said at least one email message to a location that can be
21 shared by a plurality of intended recipients for reading said email message, and
22 further comprising after said redirecting, notifying intended recipients of the email
23 message that an email message intended for them has been redirected to said
24 location.

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11. The email filtering method of claim 10, wherein said redirecting comprises storing only one copy of the email message.

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12. An email filtering method comprising:
receiving an email message at an email server that maintains inboxes for individual recipients, wherein the email message is addressed to a plurality of recipients;
calculating a score for the email message at the server location based upon at least one of (a) the size of the email message, and (b) the number of specified recipient addresses;
comparing the score with a threshold value that defines a likelihood of whether an email message constitutes an unwanted email message;
responsive to the email message exceeding the threshold value, placing a copy of the email message at a first location other than any of the intended recipients' inboxes; and
sending a notification to the intended recipients that a copy of an email message that was intended for them has been placed at the first location.

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13. The email filtering method of claim 12, wherein the threshold value is determined independent of the message conveyed by any of the text that is contained in any part of the email message.

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1 14. The email filtering method of claim 12, wherein the score is based
2 upon both the size of the email message and the number of specified recipient
3 addresses.

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5 15. The email filtering method of claim 12, wherein said first location is
6 a storage location that is managed by the email server.

7
8 16. The email filtering method of claim 12, wherein said threshold value
9 is based upon the number of invalid specified recipient addresses.

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11 17. The email filtering method of claim 12, wherein said sending of the
12 notification comprises placing a pointer in an email folder of each recipient of the
13 email message.

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15 18. The email filtering method of claim 12 further comprising
16 responsive to a request from a recipient, making a recipient copy of the email
17 message and placing the recipient copy at a dedicated recipient storage location.

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19 Sub A³

20 19. A computer program stored on one or more computer readable
21 media for processing email, the program comprising the following steps:

22 receiving an email message at a server location, the email message being
23 addressed to a plurality of recipients;

24 placing only one copy of the email message at a first storage location that is
25 not a dedicated storage location for just one of the intended recipients; and

1 notifying each of the intended recipients that an email message intended for
2 them has been placed at the first location.

3
4 **20.** The steps of claim 19, wherein the first storage location is a storage
5 location that is managed by a server associated with the server location.

6
7 **21.** The steps of claim 19, wherein the first storage location is a storage
8 location that is managed by a server associated with the server location, and is
9 accessible to any of the intended recipients.

10
11 **22.** The steps of claim 19, wherein said notifying comprises creating a
12 pointer to the first location, and placing the pointer at a plurality of second
13 locations each of which being dedicated to a different one of the intended
14 recipients, wherein individual recipients can use the pointer to access the email
15 message at the first storage location.

16
17 **23.** The steps of claim 19 further comprising prior to said placing:
18 defining a profile of unwanted email messages based upon at least one of:
19 the size of an email message, the number of specified recipient addresses, and the
20 number of invalid specified recipient addresses;
21 determining whether an email message meets the profile; and
22 wherein said placing and said notifying takes place only if the email
23 message meets the profile.
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1 24. A programmed email server that contains computer-readable
2 instructions which, when executed by the email server, perform the following
3 steps:

4 determining whether an email message that is received by the email server
5 likely constitutes an unwanted email message; and

6 if the email message likely constitutes an unwanted email message:

7 storing a copy of the email message at a first storage location rather
8 than individual storage locations that are dedicated to individual intended
9 recipients of the email message; and

10 notifying intended recipients of the email message that an email
11 message addressed to them has been received by the server.

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13 25. The steps of claim 24, wherein said determining takes place without
14 considering the message conveyed by any content of the sender's address field, the
15 subject field, or the message field.

16
17 26. The steps of claim 24 further comprising enabling intended
18 recipients, if they so desire, to read the email message at the first storage location.

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20 27. The steps of claim 26, wherein said enabling comprises doing so
21 without making any copies of the copy of the email message at the first storage
22 location.

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1 **28.** The steps of claim 26 further comprising receiving instructions from
2 an intended recipient that a copy of the email message be made specifically for
3 them, and responsive thereto, making a copy of the email message, and storing
4 said copy at a recipient-specific location.

5
6 **29.** The steps of claim 24, wherein said determining takes place by
7 considering the size of the email message.

8
9 **30.** The steps of claim 24, wherein said determining takes place by
10 considering the number of specified recipient addresses of the email message.

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12 **31.** The steps of claim 24, wherein said determining takes place by
13 considering the number of invalid specified recipient addresses.

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15 **32.** The steps of claim 24, wherein said determining takes place by
16 defining a plurality of heuristics that establish a profile of unwanted email
17 messages, wherein the profile considers factors that are independent of any
18 message conveyed by an email message's content, and applying the plurality of
19 heuristics to an email message.

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21 **33.** The steps of claim 32, wherein the heuristics are adjustable.
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34. An email screening method comprising:

developing a profile of unsolicited commercial email based upon the size of an email message and the number of specified recipient addresses of the email message;

configuring a mail server that is responsible for storing and distributing email messages to a plurality of clients with a filter processor that is programmed to evaluate email messages that are received in light of the developed profile;

evaluating email messages with the filter processor and determining whether the email messages fit the developed profile; and

if an email message fits the developed profile, initiating a remedial measure that ensures that the mail server does not make as many copies of the email message as there are specified recipient addresses.

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35. The email screening method of claim 34, wherein said remedial measure comprises storing one copy of the email message at a server storage location, instead of storing multiple copies of the email message for the specified recipient addresses.

36. The email screening method of claim 34, wherein said remedial measure comprises storing one copy of the email message at a server storage location, instead of storing multiple copies of the email message for the specified recipient addresses, and notifying intended recipients that an email message intended for them has been stored at the server storage location.

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1 37. The email screening method of claim 34, wherein said remedial
2 measure comprises storing one copy of the email message at a server storage
3 location, instead of storing multiple copies of the email message for the specified
4 recipient addresses, and notifying intended recipients that an email message
5 intended for them has been stored at the server storage location by placing a
6 pointer in a designated email folder for the intended recipients.

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8 38. The email screening method of claim 37 further comprising, for
9 each recipient who so desires, reading the email message from the server storage
10 location.

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12 39. The email screening method of claim 37 further comprising, for
13 each recipient who so desires, copying the email message from the server storage
14 location to a recipient-location.

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16 40. An email delivery method comprising:
17 establishing a bulk email folder in which bulk email is to be stored;
18 configuring an email server to receive email messages and deliver them
19 either to multiple server storage locations that are dedicated to storing email
20 messages for respective recipients or to a single, shared location that can be shared
21 by a plurality of the recipients;
22 receiving an email message;
23 comparing an address for the sender of the email message with a recipient's
24 list of approved senders; and
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1 delivering the email message to the single, shared location if: (a) the email
2 message is not directly addressed to a recipient that is serviced by the server, and
3 (b) the sender's address does not appear in the recipient's list of approved senders.

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5 41. The email delivery method of claim 40 further comprising
6 maintaining the email message at the single, shared location only for a
7 determinable amount of time.

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9 42. An email screening method comprising:
10 developing a profile of unwanted email messages based upon whether an
11 email message is similar in content to another email message;
12 configuring a mail server that is responsible for storing email messages for
13 a plurality of clients with a filter processor that is programmed to evaluate email
14 messages that are received in light of the developed profile;
15 evaluating email messages with the filter processor and determining
16 whether the email message fits the developed profile; and
17 if the email message fits the developed profile, placing a copy of the email
18 message in a first location and, rather than placing multiple copies of the email
19 message in multiple dedicated client storage locations, notifying the multiple
20 clients that an email message addressed to them has been received so that the
21 clients can read the email message if they so desire.
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1 **43.** An email screening method comprising:
2 defining an index having values that are assigned to various degrees of
3 desirability that an email message can have, wherein the degrees of desirability
4 extend from a low degree of desirability to a high degree of desirability;
5 associating a plurality of parameters having parameter values with the
6 various degrees of desirability, wherein at least some of the parameters do not
7 depend on any message that is conveyed by any content of an email message; and
8 establishing a user interface through which a user can adjust either (a)
9 individual parameter values that, in turn, establish a degree of desirability, or (b)
10 index values that themselves establish a degree of desirability that email messages
11 must have in order to be saved to dedicated user storage locations; and
12 evaluating incoming email messages against the index value that is defined
13 by the user.

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15 **44.** The email screening method of claim 43, wherein the parameter
16 values are adjustable.

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18 **45.** The email screening method of claim 43, wherein one of the
19 parameters is associated with the number of specified recipient addresses.

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21 **46.** The email screening method of claim 43, wherein one of the
22 parameters is associated with a percentage of invalid specified recipient addresses.
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1 47. The email screening method of claim 43, wherein one of the
2 parameters is associated with the size of an email message.

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3 48. An email server system comprising:
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5 a user storage database configured to store user information including email
6 messages that are intended for individual users; and
7
8 a server configured to receive email messages that are intended for various
9 users and store the email messages in dedicated user storage locations within the
10 user storage database;

11 wherein the server is further configured to screen email messages based
12 upon a set of heuristics that determine whether an email message likely constitutes
13 an unwanted email message, the server further being configured to place a single
14 copy of an email message in a storage location that is not a dedicated user storage
15 location if it is determined by screening the email message that it likely constitutes
16 an unwanted email message.

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17 49. The email server system of claim 48, wherein the set of heuristics
18 considers the size of an email message.

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20 50. The email server system of claim 48, wherein the set of heuristics
21 considers the number of specified user addresses that are specified by an email
22 message.
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1 **51.** The email server system of claim 48, wherein the set of heuristics
2 considers the number of invalid specified user addresses that are specified by an
3 email message.

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5 **52.** The email server system of claim 48, wherein the server is further
6 configured to place a pointer to the storage location in which the single copy of the
7 email message is placed, in each dedicated user storage location that corresponds
8 to a valid specified user address contained in the email message.

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